

# Ageing in the undergraduate Sociology curriculum

## ■ Current situation

Reviewed modules – core and elective –  
on 20 undergraduate programmes in  
Sociology (all RAE 4/5).

4 out of 20 had elective modules in ageing

No evidence for study of ageing –  
demographic/social/cultural/economic  
aspects – in remainder

## Explanatory factors

- Marginalisation of ageing within sociology in the UK
- Absence of life course perspective
- Dominance of social welfare/social problem perspective
- Failure to link critical gerontology with critical sociology

## Explanatory factors (cont)

- Lack of undergraduate tradition as in US (u/g degree – major and minor – in gerontology)
- Inter-disciplinary strengths in US – humanities, social sciences and natural sciences
- Strength of particular areas in US e.g. ethics, thanatology, human development, family studies.

# Approaches

- Develop ideas about key elements in a module concerned with social ageing which draws on key sociological themes (e.g. the body, globalization, gender)
- Link together modules to form 'concentrations' of interest (see e.g. Case Western Reserve Health and Aging Concentration:  
Human Development/ Health Illness and Behaviour/  
Sociology of Stress and Coping/ Sociology of  
Institutional Care/ The Life Course/Health care Delivery/  
Aging in American Society

- Gender – but not older women
- Whither medical sociology
- Workers but not retired
- Family but dependants only
- Bodies but not old bodies
- Ageless migrants

# Strategies for developing social science contribution to ageing:

- + work through professional bodies
- + textbooks (e.g. Giddens)
- + develop undergraduate curriculum where there are concentrations of social gerontological interests.
- + HEFCE Strategic Development Fund